

Series II
Subjects Files,
1916-1973

Box 13, Folder 10

August 1959 -
September 1959

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12 Mt. Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island
August 26, 1959

Dear Judge:

Needless to say, the death of Admiral Halsey has filled me with great concern. Naturally, we knew that in time, as it must to all men, Admiral Halsey would be called by his maker. He has not been too well over the recent years and, as a matter of fact, retired physically at the end of the war.

The reason I am writing to you is the death of Admiral Halsey alerts me to the fact that other commanders, as well, will be disappearing from the field of struggle and historians will have to rely more and more on hearsay and other questionable evidence. This is not to say that the evidence of commanders is not good, but it is often not good and must always be weighed with facts at the time.

You can readily see that if I had been permitted to complete my books on Leyte Gulf, I would definitely have finished the parts relating to Admiral Halsey. Therefore, I would have had a story which he finally would have approved although, perhaps, he would not have liked it. For example, Admiral Kinkaid did not like particularly what I wrote about him in Volumes III and V but, nevertheless, his Chief of Staff approved, as you remember, what was finally placed in there. Thus, I feel that our write-ups for Admiral Kinkaid's operation are pretty close to the truth.

As I have written to you recently, there is little doubt that Admiral Halsey's Staff feels the same. Admiral Carney wrote a letter to Admirals Morison and Anderson telling them about my books and approving, in general, what has been said to date. So here we are with an approved story and we have not been able to finish it and while we wait, the evidence dies.

I don't think we are going to get much action on this thing unless you personally take a direct and firm hand. I think that you might well be able to present this to Admiral Burke and suggest that the matter be finished. There is no room in the main War College Building for this purpose, but it could be set up elsewhere with the War College label on it still.

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Conolly

You will remember that Admiral ~~Carney~~ asked for the privilege of having this completed under his direction but was informed that there were no funds available.

I am getting more concerned than ever about this as there has been a move afoot in the War College to destroy by fire a lot of the World War II records. I have succeeded in stopping it for the present and I am standing guard over it.

I think that it might be possible and if you and I can work together on it, I am willing to try. I think it possible that we might be able to get a foundation to support us.

In this connection, Captain Titus, who is being retired as of next month when he will be leaving for California, is not too well and, I think, will be willing to take a job on this, if we can restore it one way or another.

I haven't made any estimates on this because I feel that an estimate is somewhat shaky. If you desire, I will look over the situation again and see if there are any changes required over what we had before. I still feel, of course, that we should have at least one fellow working up one part of the action, another fellow working up the other part of the action, with me bringing in the continuity and the main write-up. I think that if we do this, we can work out pretty well with a total of three or four officers, including me, and possibly two yeomen and one draftsman.

You must have your yeomen and draftsman because if you don't, other people take their time and you can never get your hands on them. I am going to write to Mick Carney about this because I think Mick would like to have this thing finished before he is taken, as well as his leader. One never knows today what one's future life will be, because wartime demands on commanders have shortened life in many cases. Notice what happened to McCain, Mitscher, Lee, Towers and others—all dead.

I hope to come down to Washington next month as soon as it gets cooler down there. Frankly, it's far from cool up here. With best regards, I am

As ever,

R. W. Bates
Rear Admiral (ret.)

Rear Admiral E. M. Eller
Naval History Division (Op-09B9)
Washington 25, D. C.

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ROBT. B. CARNEY
ADMIRAL, UNITED STATES NAVY, (RET.)
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1 September 1959

Rear Admiral R. W. Bates, USN (Ret.)
12 Mount Vernon Street
Newport, Rhode Island

My dear Rafe:

I am afraid that this will not do justice, in length, to your letter of the 26th, because I seem to have a flock of unfinished chores clamoring for attention. However, some prompt acknowledgment is in order, even if a bit on the brief side.

As you pointed out, something special passed from the scene with Bill Halsey. He was a unique figure, and, to a degree which I have never known elsewhere, he had the capability of inspiring unfailing personal loyalty in his people. Perhaps his most endearing quality was his unfailing crediting of subordinates with the successes of his Command, and his equally quick assumption of full responsibility for anything which went wrong.

I think that we are all glad that he was spared invalidism or senility; none of us would have wished to have remembered him that way.

I, too, wish that you could have finished your task at the War College; you know my sentiments on that subject too well for me to reiterate them here.

As to my book, I don't know. I have mixed emotions on that subject. In the context of your letter, I would say that LEYTE would be but one incident in the sort of book I would like to write when I am finished with the present and start living in the past; perhaps that concept would not result in the sort of historic treatment of the subject which you have in mind.

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Such thinking as I have done on the subject seems to be pointing toward an effort quite different from those exactitudes and annotations which would have merit in the eyes of historians.

Be that as it may, I am still a long way from serious effort in that direction, but I do rather vaguely hope that one of these days I may leave something a little useful, a little constructive, a little interesting, and perhaps a little amusing.

In the meantime, all the best to you, as ever, my friend.



ROBT. B. CARNEY
Admiral, USN (Ret.)

RBC:rw

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14 September 1959

Rear Admiral E. M. Eller USN
Director
Naval History Division
Main Navy Building
18th and Constitution Avenue, N. W.
Washington 25, D. C.

My dear Judge:

I am sure that you are aware of the fact that I have always regretted the termination of Rafe Bates' project at the NWC.

The decision was taken after I ceased to have any responsibility for matters Naval; and yet I feel that I do have a residual interest at least in the LEYTE aspects of Rafe's work - which gives me the courage to mention the matter once more.

Aside from a rather natural personal interest in a correct historical perspective of that battle, I am sure that it would be generally agreed that it was one of the epic sea fights of all history, and one which will be studied for years to come. Such being the case, I am sure that it would also be universally agreed that it deserves the most complete, factual, and objective analysis possible.

It was my official judgment that Rafe was proceeding in painstaking and objective fashion. He had made an excellent start on the project, and it still seems to me that the net result would be a plus were he allowed to finish it. Perhaps ways, other than support by appropriated funds, could be found for securing the necessary support - you would know far more than I about such possibilities.

This is not by way of debating any of the factors on which the decision to terminate was made; those are outside the purview of a retired officer. I mention the matter, again, only because of the renewed interest aroused by wide spread exceptions taken to Morison's Volume XII and the live trend in the direction of setting history straight on all aspects of that momentous and significant struggle.

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When you have time, I wonder if you would give me a call on the phone and discuss this with me.

Sincerely,

ROBT. B. CARNEY
Admiral, USN (Ret.)

RBC:rw

Blind copy to:
RADM R. W. Bates

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